DARK HORSE 20 YEARS
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
114
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ON THE PERFECTION OF ANATOMY 3 OF 6
DIRECT SALES
HIROAKI SAMURA
BLADE
OF THE IMMORTAL

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

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cover colors by **DAN JACKSON**

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI
Immortal *rōnin* vowed to protect Rin and aid her in her quest for revenge.

RIN
Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* destroyed by the Ittō *ryū*.

HABAKI KAGIMURA
Powerful *bangashira* serving the shogun and seeking the secret of immortality.

BURANDO
Deranged medical examiner saved from prison by Kagimura.

DEWANOSUKE
Manji's cellmate a simple man caught up in Kagimura's immortality experiments.

YAMADA ASAEMON
Nicknamed "Kubikiri Asa," the shogun's executioner is an expert sword tester and a limb-cutting connoisseur.

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessen-chu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Lured to Kagimura's *bakufu* stronghold near Edo Castle, Manji is ambushed, overwhelmed, and imprisoned in an underground cell. Seeking to impart the powers of the *kessen-chu* to another human, Kagimura orders his medical examiners to discover the secrets of Manji's regenerative abilities. Crazed surgeon Ayame Burando seems to make progress, as he successfully transfers Manji and Dewanosuke's limbs and gives Dewanosuke's body accelerated self-healing powers. After Burando boasts of his success, Kagimura insists on a test of his own . . .

designer **DEBRA BAILEY** editor **PHILIP SIMON**
publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON**

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無限の住人

ON THE PERFECTION OF ANATOMY

–part three–

ARE YOU
PREPARED,
DEWANOSUKE?

W-WAIT A MOMENT!
HABAKI-DONO!
...WAIT?
BURANDO, IF I AM TO TRUST WHAT YOU SAY... DEWANOSUKE MUST NOW HAVE THE BODY OF AN "IMMORTAL."
I WANT TO TEST THIS.
WHY HAVE ME WAIT?

...URRNG!
D...
DOC.
IT'S OKAY BY ME.

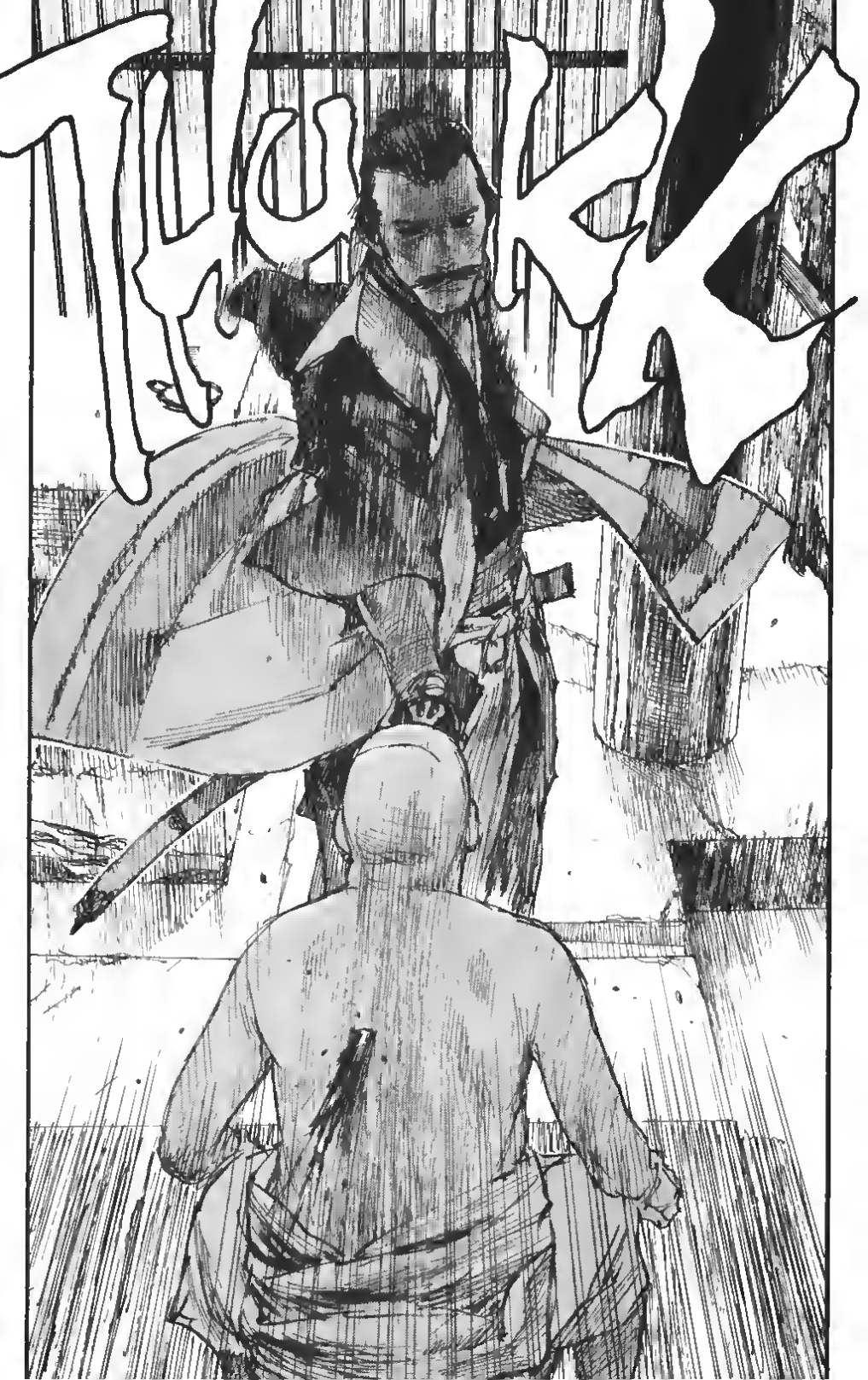
EVER SINCE THE DAY I CAME HERE...
...AN' SAW MANJI HUNG UP AND GETTING HACKED...
...I FIGURED IF I GOT IMMORTAL, THE SAME WOULD HAPPEN TO ME.
..I AIN'T AFRAID O' NO-THING.
I'M READY FOR IT.
DOC...
..I'M GOOD. I BELIEVE IN YOU.
FACT IS, I... I FEEL LIKE... I GOT A NEW BODY.
IF YOU TELL ME NOT TO WORRY...

BURAN-DO!
STOP HIM!
DEWA!
YOU THINK YOU GOT A NEW BODY, PAL?!
WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU KNOW?!
YOU CAN HEAL A WOUND WITH-OUT A TRACE... HOW MUCH FUCKING WEIRDER DO YOU WANNA BE?!
WHY CAN'T YOU BE SATISFIED WITH THAT?!

BURAN-DO!
DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DID IT...
...BUT USE THAT BIG BRAIN OF YOURS!
FORGET THIS CRAP.
USE YOUR EYES! DOES THIS GUY LOOK IMMORTAL?!
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'S THE SAME MAN YOU BROUGHT HERE. DESICCATED LIKE THIS.
HIS EYES CAN'T EVEN FRIGGIN' FOCUS.

BURANDO.
IF YOUR WORK'S BEEN SO PERFECT...
...WHY DO YOU HESITATE?
DO YOU SAY "WAIT," NOW, BECAUSE YOU LACK CONFI-DENCE?
I, TOO, COULD HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS...
...ABOUT YOUR FUTURE, AS WELL.
WHA...?

WHACK
YAAR GHH!
HA-HABAKI-DONO!
HABAKI... DONO...
PLEASE...
...PLEASE PROCEED!



hrawf
SHIF
SHIK
.....
.....
UNG...
URR...

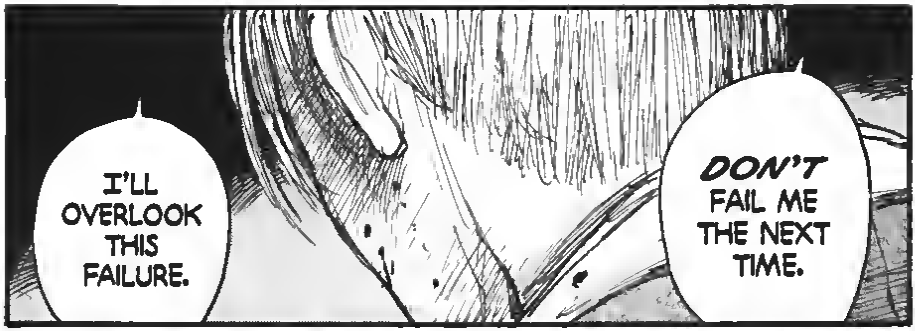
BLOOSH!

HAIEEE !!
Nooo! DEWA-NOSUKE !!

GPPK
BRG...
DEWA-
NOSUKE...
.....
.....
.....

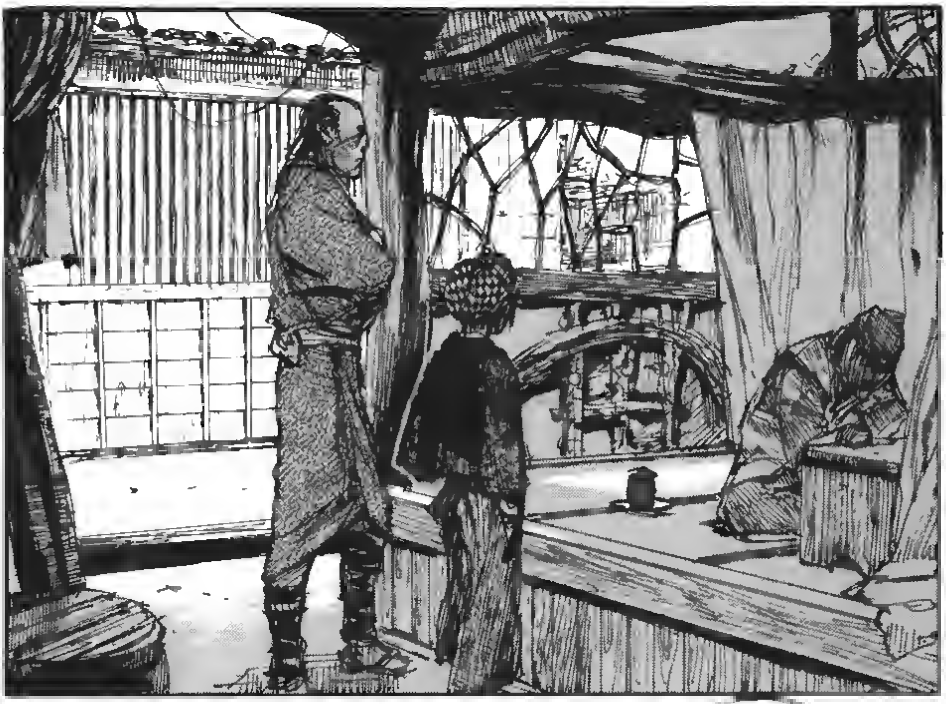
...HE'S DEAD.
.....
.....

BURANDO.
I'LL PROCURE THE NEXT FELON SHORTLY.
YOU... WILL CONTINUE YOUR MISSION.


I'LL OVERLOOK THIS FAILURE.
DON'T FAIL ME THE NEXT TIME.

HRK

YOU GODDAMN BASTARDS!



HMPH...
SO THESE ARE YOUR EXPENSES?

WHY'S THIS PLACE ALWAYS SMELLING LIKE *WEEDS*?
YOU DON'T SAVOR THE SCENT OF *HERBS*, DŌA?
NO. I *HATE* IT.
WHEN I WAS LITTLE, THEY STUCK *OTON-PUIKINA* UP MY BUTT. REMINDS ME OF THAT.
HO! THAT LAXATIVE, EH? WON'T FIND IT IN THIS SHOP.
YOU ONLY GET THAT GRASS IN *EZO*.
I WASN'T THERE, BUT I HEAR HE WENT OUT IN STYLE, OUR TOSHŪ...
KOJI, MAKE SURE THIS GETS TO THE *TOSHŪ*...
ISAKU.

I HEAR HIS GRANDFATHER SABURŌ WAS A WILD ONE.
MAYBE IT'S IN HIS BLOOD, EH?
HO HO! STILL A YOUNG'N, THAT ANOTSU KAGEHISA.
YEAH. YEAH! HE DID! BURNED THE DŌJŌ, EVEN.

AND SO? WHEN DO WE STRIKE?
H-HE SAID IN THE WINTER.
WINTER, EH?

WILL THIS BE READY...
...IN TIME...?

GIVE MY BEST TO ABAYAMA AND THE TOSHŪ.
THEN, WE'LL COME AGAIN.
SEE YA LATER, KASHIN KOJI!
DON'T CALL ME THAT OUT-DOORS!
MY NAME HERE IS MIZUSHINA-SENSEI!
A DOCTOR WITH TWO NAMES... LIVING IN A NAGAYA? SUSPICIOUS, SUSPI-CIOUS!
...OKAY. WHAT-EVER
COWARD-LY KOJI.
ISAKU! SHUT THIS GIRL UP!

♪
DŌA! WHAT'S THAT?!
I GOT IT FROM KOJI'S PLACE.
YOU S-STOLE IT...?! NOT AGAIN?!
?!
LET ME THE FUCK GO!!
OWW! DAMN!
HOW DO YOU READ THAT? "ZUIKI"?
THESE TWO ARE "HIGO," YOU THINK?
GOSH... I... CAN'T READ THOSE SQUIG-GLES...

GOT SLOSHED AND PUT UP MY DUKES, IS ALL!
WHAT DO YOU *JITTE-MOCHI* GOTTA DO WITH IT?!
YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT, TELL 'EM AT *KODENMA-CHŌ*.
K-*KODEN-MA--?!* YOU GOTTA BE *JOKING!*
BEEN SEEING A LOT OF THAT.
UHH... UH-HUH.
OLD ABAYAMA SAYS IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME THE *OKAPPIKI* HAVE BEEN FILLING QUOTAS, BUT...
BUT FIVE GUYS FOR A BAR FIGHT? AND ONE OF 'EM A *DŌSHIN*?
D-DON'T REMEMBER IT LIKE THAT *BEFORE*...
IF SOMEONE GUESSES WE'RE *ITTŌ-RYŪ*...
...WE'RE IN FOR IT. OUGHTA DRESS *NORMAL*, DŌA... HUH?

EH?
D-DŌA?!
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
YOU CARRY ONE OF THOSE, AND YOU GET PAID...
...TO PICK ON LITTLE PEOPLE.
WHAT?!
NICE TOY.
HUHH?!
GIVE ME ONE, PLEASE.

YOU LITTLE... MIDGET!!
YOU'RE GONNA BE SORRY!
FWAPP!
... HEAVEN HELP Y--?!
I'M NAKIZŌ OF THE SUMIDA!
AND ONCE I'M ON YOU...
HYECHH!
WHAT THE HELL'S THAT?!

EH HEH HEH HEH HEH...
YOU TOLD ME YOUR NAME.
YOU KNOW, IN MY CREW...
...THAT MEANS YOU'RE NOT AFRAID TO DIE.
I'LL KILL YOU AAH..!
HUPP
.....
.....
.....
.....

UM, S-SO...
...SORRY...
OUCH! OUCH! ISAKU!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
WE... WE'LL BE GOIN'... KEEP UP THE G-GOOD WORK.
YOU CAN HAVE THE ROPE...
.....
.....
DARN YOU!
YOU BIG DUMMY!!
HEAVE HO!
HEAVE HO!
TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT MONTH:
ON THE PERFECTION OF ANATOMY, Part 4 of 6

Burando's grip on reality slips a bit more- and he struggles to continue his research while in a depressed stupor. Habaki Kagimura isn't letting his prize doctor off the hook, though. Kagimura pushes for new tests with a new felon. Word of his experiments in immortality is spreading through Edo's jails, and Manji's cocky new cellmate is a *willing volunteer* who has no idea what pain is in store for him. Hiroaki Samura's samurai drama continues its dark descent into a horrific world of torture and "modern Japanese medicine," as the secrets of Manji's mystical *kessen-chu* are slowly revealed.

GLOSSARY

Ainu Natives of the Japanese archipelago who were driven north by today's modern Japanese population, now found only on the northern island of Hokkaidō

Bangashira. Head of the *banshū*

Banshū Officers serving under the shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the shogun himself

Dōjō A school for combat and self-defense training in martial arts, here a training center for swordsmanship

Dono Archaic honorific used to show respect, usually for someone of higher rank

Dōshin Police constables from the lower ranks of the samurai caste, serving under *yoriki*, police "sergeants"

Edo Capital of pre-modern Japan. Later renamed Tokyo

Ezo Old Japanese word for northern lands inhabited by the *Ainu*, sometimes used to refer to the Ainu themselves

Itō-ryū The radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa

Jitte-mochi The standard weapon of non-samurai police in Edo was the *jitte* a three-pronged truncheon designed to catch and with a deft twist, snap the blade of a criminal's sword *Jitte mochi* ("*Jitte*-carrier") was one of many terms for "cop"

Kaizō Shigi Ayame Burando's journal

Kessen-chu The "sacred bloodworms" A person infected by them cannot die but feels pain like a mortal

Mutenichi-ryū The sword school led by Rin's father (now deceased) destroyed by Anotsu Kagehisa

Okappiki In the many-layered world of Edo law enforcement the *okappiki* were commoners hired by *dōshin* constables to round up criminals and do other dirty work They were hated for their abuses, including rounding up innocents to meet arrest quotas and impress their bosses

Otonpuikina An *Ainu* word for *Chelidonium majus*, known in Japanese as *kusanoō* which was used to treat a wide range of conditions, including constipation, vision problems, and several skin conditions

Sumida The Sumida and Arakawa Rivers form parts of Edo's boundaries, and the Sumida was an important route for commerce Also, a possible anachronistic reference to the modern, northeastern ward of Tokyo (formerly Edo)

Toshū Leader master

Yamada Asaemon Nicknamed *Kubikiri Asa*, the Shogun's executioner was a master swordsman, sword tester, and an expert at beheading and cutting human bodies

Yoriki Middle-ranked samurai who dealt with criminal or judicial affairs during the Edo Period, something comparable to nowadays police sergeants or superintendents

ABOUT THE SWASTIKA

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol This symbol is also known as the *swastika* a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from *su* — "well" + *asti* — "he is") As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune the *swastika* was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika* which moves in a counterclockwise direction, and is called the *manji* in Japanese The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices The *swastika*, whose arms point in a clockwise direction, is generally considered a solar symbol It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis It is important that readers understand that the *swastika* has ancient and honorable origins, and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century (ca 1782-3) *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror imaging his artwork Some manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages However Mr Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique There are, of course some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead

The Sound Effects & Dialogue Since some of Mr Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr Samura chose to redraw the panel We hope readers will view the un-retouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr Samura's extraordinary artwork In addition, Mr Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan Mr Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text

LETTERS

Send letters and fan art to:

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www.darkhorse.com • blade@darkhorse.com

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Manji by Eliot Min, Portland, Oregon

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KRYPTONIA-DGP